

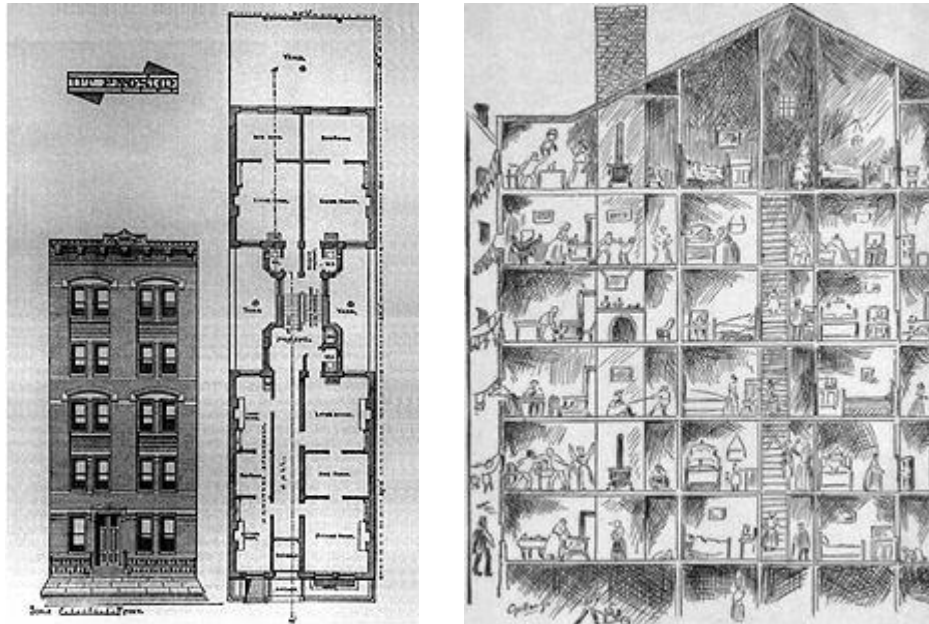
The Rise of the City

The following are short extracts of statements made by famous people about the living conditions in New York City during the late 1800's. Together, they give the reader a vivid picture of what life was really like during these times. I have added several photographs to validate their statements.

Today, what is a tenement? "It is generally a brick building from four to six stories high on the street, frequently with a store on the first floor which, when used for the sale of liquor, has a side opening for the benefit of the inmates and to evade the Sunday law; four families occupy each floor, and a set of rooms consists of one or two dark closets, used as bedrooms, with a living room twelve feet by ten. The staircase is too often a dark well in the center of the house, and no direct through ventilation is possible, each family being separated from the other by partitions. Frequently the rear of the lot is occupied by another building of three stories high with two families on a floor."

It no longer excites even passing attention, when the Sanitary police report counting 101 adults and 91 children in a Crosby Street House....Or when a midnight inspection in Mulberry Street unearths a hundred and fifty "lodgers" sleeping on filthy floors in two buildings....The tenements today are New York, harboring three-fourths of its population....

Jacob Riis, 1890



In most large cities...there are too many scattered efforts, aiming in a desultory manner at this and that particular evil, resulting from the condition of the children of the streets. There is no unity of plan and of work....So threatening is the danger in every populous town from the children who are neglected, that the best talent ought to be engaged to study their condition and devise their improvement....We would not breathe a word against the absolute necessity of Christianity in any scheme of thorough social reform....To attempt to prevent or cure the fearful moral diseases of our lowest classes without Christianity, is like trying to carry through a sanitary reform in a city without sunlight.

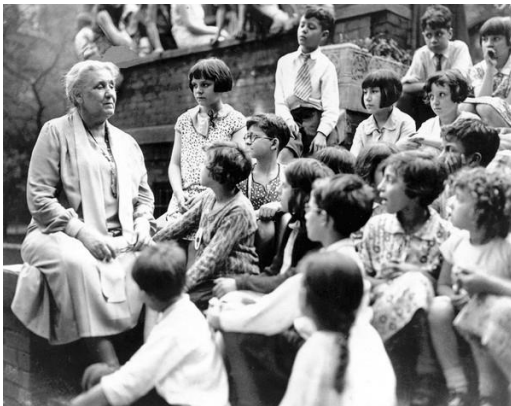
Charles Loring Brace, 1872

Heretofore the church has addressed itself to the inner life and left the home to supply a healthy environment; but this the congested tenement cannot do; the socialized church therefore provides certain home conditions which are absolutely essential to normal life and growth....Under the assimilating influence of the Parish House, foreigners are being Americanized....Another admirable institution is the Loan Association which has saved many from falling into the clutches of Shylock....Clinics,--medical, surgical, dental, eye, ear, throat, and nose,--are held daily except Sundays.

Josiah Strong

Never before in civilization have such numbers of young girls been suddenly released from the protection of the home and permitted to walk unattended upon city streets....Never before have such numbers of young boys earned money independently of the family life, and felt themselves free to spend it as they choose in the midst of vice deliberately disguised as pleasure....Let us know the modern city in its weakness and wickedness, and then seek to rectify and purify it until it shall be free at least from the grosser temptations which now beset the young people who are living in its tenement houses and working in its factories.

Jane Addams



Jane Addams reading to children



Hull House in Chicago part founded by Jane Addams

Key Questions to consider:

1. What political, economic, and moral problems were raised by the late 19th and early 20th century city?
2. How did reformers propose to solve the problems of the city?